I know many of you enjoy keeping track of the adventures of my family and I. Well, 2006 was no different. Jacob will turn 12 soon. Last year he crossed over from cub scouts to boy scouts and is enjoying that very much. He also graduated from 5th grade and elementary school to middle school and 6th grade. Now he knows what homework really is!

We were very active, especially between April and October, when the weather was really nice. We got our kayaks into the water early last year during the school vacation in April and continued paddling around until late October. It was a big thrill this year to see many mature eagles on the river! You can view some by paddling the CT River in Longmeadow and also the river just north of the Mass Pike bridge in Chicopee. They are magnificant to watch and are a great reason to paddle more.

We continued our camping & kayaking and biking trips. Exploring and learning more about this amazing country we live in. Last years adventures took us to NY, VT & Maine. This year we are planning on the Cape, Maine & NH & maybe more if we can fit it in. It seems I get even more interested as we do more. You can read up on our adventures at: www.wemakehousecalls.biz and click on newsletters & read our summer newsletters. Check there periodically for more updates as they will be posted there.

We now even take our laptop camping with us as nearly every campground has wireless internet. While camping, it's not unusual to see campers on picnic tables emailing back home or checking the latest news and weather.

But bringing a laptop camping opens up a concern that many people have. Should I be concerned with my data? This is a concern that everyone should have.

Am I backing up my data safely and sufficiently? Lots of photo's, music and more can easily outstrip the capacity of a CD. For this reason, you might want to have a DVD burner installed in your computer (most laptops have them already) or add a external hard drive.

A DVD will hold 4.7 gigs of data. That's almost 8 times the capacity of a CD. A higher capacity DVD holds even more.

These are the days of very high capacity hard drives. It's not unusual to have 160, 250 or more gigs in a system. With that in mind, if you go external hard drive, I recommend no smaller than a 160 gig external hard drive. These plug into your usb ports and are pretty fast with USB 2.0 these days.

But how to select what gets backed up? You could select individual folders to copy to the backup device or use a backup program. One program that I highly recommend is called Acronis True Image Home version (http://www.acronis.com/homecomputing/products/trueimage/). This is a very fast and accurate program that can back up your whole hard drive. From that backup, it is very easy to select individual files or folder or the whole backup and restore it back to your computer. You can even create a bootable CD in case your system crashes, you can boot from the cd and read the backup from your external hard drive and restore very quickly and easily. This is the best way to backup a lot of data and files. It's something to think about. Just ask yourself "How important is my data"?

Windows Vista: Should I upgrade or buy a new computer? That's a very tricky question to answer. If your computer is 3 or more years old, then replacing it is a better solution. Sometimes upgrading video cards, hard drives, memory (RAM) can be too cost prohibitive and would not make sense. If you have a power machine though, you might not have to do much. Most people would have to add RAM or replace the video card.

If your computer is 4, 5 or more years old, then it is time to replace it. If you're running Windows 95, 98 or ME, are experiencing problems, can't load new software or it's just running so darn slow, then a new computer is definitely something to think about.

What does Vista offer you? Vista is more than a money making scheme for Microsoft. It is a complete upgrade over XP. Vista cures the huge security issues that have become such a pain to XP. It has all the features of XP plus some new ones. Vista also offers a new user interface, more on-screen enhancements called widgets (similar to google side bar gadgets), a new menu system, enhanced menu features, parental controls (for those of you with kids), and much more. There is also 4 main versions of Vista. But the Vista Home Ultimate would be the one I reccomend the most as it has all the features anyone could ever want! You can view the comparison chart at: http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/windowsvista/editions/choose.mspx.

I have been building custom computers for years. I still do that too. But, I am also selling Acer desktop computers. Acer has a lot of very good things going for it. They make excellent computers, are expandable as you grow and for the few times I have had to use them thru the years, have excellent tech support. Acer is one of very few companies that still uses United States citizens for their tech support. So a call placed will have you speaking with someone in Oklahoma, not over seas with a impossible to understand accent! It may not mean much at the time of purchase, but if you need help, it means a great deal. I have many customers who have purchased Dell and other mass market brands and spend HOURS on the phone trying to get help. This will not happen with Computer Care and Acer or our custom built computers! Something to think about!

What about laptops and notebooks? I have been selling Acer laptops and notebooks for many years now. Here too they make an excellent product and offer the same excellent tech support from this country. If you need a replacement laptop OR something smaller for your main home computer, a laptop is a logical choice. Wireless is standard with all laptops these days, but only Acer uses the Signal Up enhancement technology for extended range wireless. These days, you can find all the features of a desktop in a much smaller package. Also, many laptops have built in digital film card readers. Take the card out of your digital camera and insert into the card reader in the laptop. Transfer your images and the card is ready for use again in your digital camera.

Screen size is something that every one considers. How about a desktop replacement laptop with a 20 inch screen!? This is a real power machine with very fast processor, huge hard drives, dvd/cd burners, full size keyboard with numeric keypad and much more. Don't need something THAT extravagent? Laptops with 17 inch screens are also available. But 15.4 inch wide is much more common and is easily seeable. I bought Faye (my wife) a Acer laptop last May with a 14.1 inch screen. A smaller screen reduces weight. But it's perfect for us both. Give us a call and we can discuss many features that you may want.

In the past few years, digital cameras have outsold film cameras. The digials use a memory card to store hundreds of images which

are then transferred to your computer. The card is then erased or formatted to make blank and ready to be re-used for more pictures. If you're still using just a film camera, you are missing out on so much fun of digitals!

For 2007, there is going to be a huge price drop of SLR high end digital cameras. Canon, Sony, Nikon and others have realized there is a huge demand for these SLR digitals. If you own any existing lenses by that brand, imagine being able to use them with these new digital cameras! This will open up a whole new world for you.

I myself am a big fan of Panasonic digital cameras. I just added my 2nd Panasonic to my collection. This camera is a 6 megapixel, 3.6x optical zoom, big 3 inch clear lcd display, simple menu system, uses the same memory cards as my larger zoom (12x optical) Panasonic 5mp camera. It uses a rechargeable, LiON battery for long life. The model is the FX01 and it is tiny and small enough to carry everywhere in my pocket. Oh, it takes beautiful pictures too.

But there are many brands with many features. Don't take too long to decide because the manufacturers are coming out with new models every 9 months or so. If you need help, Computer Care sells digital cameras and can recommend some to look at or help the research end and purchase one that will be perfect for you. There are even dig cams that can be used underwater w/o special casing. Olympus makes a few models good down to 33 feet below the surface.

Want to research them yourself? Try these two great review sites: www.dpreview.com and www.steves-digicams.com - I find them both very reliable with their reviews and are not sponsored and therefore not preferential as many other sites are.

Now what to do with all those digital pictures? You can bring them to CVS to print or upload them to an online printing service OR you can print them yourself on your own printer. I have been doing this for years now and it certainly makes life easy. A 6 or more color printer will print georgeous prints suitable for framing. No one will believe that you printed it yourself from a digital print! What about something larger than a 8x10? Epson make some large size photo printers for prints as large as 17x22! But a standard 8x10 prints great photos.

Do you take a lot of pictures while traveling? There are now small devices that can read the pictures off your digital camera memory card and transfer them to this hand held device. The pictures are stored on a hard drive, some with view screens. Then when you return home, you can transfer the pictures to your computer. If you want to know more, please contact Computer Care.

What about making your own photo album? I have been selling a software/paper program that is very easy to use. It includes everything you need (except the photos & computer) to create your own album. You select the pictures you want to use, arrange them in the software, add titles, print and assemble. The finished product is absolutely amzing! No one will believe that you created and printed it yourself. I always have these in stock and are available in 5x7 (10 pages) or 8x10 (20 page) formats. The manual is the best software manual I have ever seen and the software is simple to use. I have seen albums created by people who said they'd never be able to create one. It's an excellent product. Create an album for family and friends. Make those memories last!

View pictures on your computer. There is a simple and free program to download from the web that will use all your pictures on your computer for a screen show and change the desktop images as well. Go to www.webshots.com and download the free software. You will also have access to the millions of pictures online within webshots to download too.

Local service is something that many of us specialize in. We all take pride in our work and we work very hard and work long hours (just ask my wife) to solve or fix your problems. People are always asking me if I know a good someone for this or that, and usually I do.

In the past few years I've joined a small business networking group. There's a group of 20 or so of us that provide local, hands-on, personal service in the area. If you are looking for a web designer, photographer, printer, lawyer, realtor, handyman or many other services, point your web browser to www.ebbegroup.com and click on the "Our Members" link. There you will find all the above services and much more. They have all become friends of mine and know I can reliably refer you to them, knowing you will get excellent service. They work just as hard as I do to make your life simpler.

Contact Info

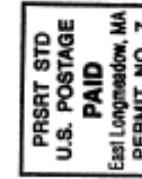**Office: (413) 567-3505 - this is often forwarded to my cell phone to speed up my contacting you.**

Cell Phone: (413) 348-3289

Email: computercare@comcast.net

Thank You!

I look forward to being in contact with you all during 2007. Remember that no question is too simple or no problem is too basic. Just ask via email or phone. If need be, we'll schedule an appointment to come out and see you!

Larry -Computer Care

Computer Care
100 Kenmore Drive
Longmeadow, MA 01106-2759

Return Service Requested